



American, Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

**Testimony Before the Public Health Committee
Submitted by Sal Luciano, Executive Director
Council 4 AFSCME
Feb. 20th, 2007**

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State of CT - DCF

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Town of Manchester

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State of CT - Corrections

David Testa, Local 387
State of CT - Corrections

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New Haven Supervisors

Valerie Walker, Local 1186
New Britain Board of Education

Claudine Wilkins-Chambers, Local 3429
New Haven Paraprofessionals

Edward Zimnoch, Local 1303
CT Municipals

Good afternoon. My name is Sal Luciano and I am the Executive Director of Council 4 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Our union represents 35,000 workers across Connecticut.

I would like to comment on proposed HB 6333.

In general, we support a single payer Health care system. The current system treats health care as a commodity. Connecticut is a leader among the other 49 states and thus, we should have higher values and demand that health care is not for sale.

Having said this, AFSCME is not against expanding the State Employee Health Care Plan provided that there are adequate measures to protect the State Health Care plan. The State health care pool is the largest in the state. It is for this reason that the prices of our Health Care plans are relatively low, despite the increased hazards of working for government and our aging population.

Widening the Health care pool would go a long way to drive costs down for municipal worker Health insurance and with some changes in the law, allowing businesses in.

AFSCME and CEA and other unions have specifically attempted to create a large pool through Mega-MEHIP for this reason. Whether this occurs or whether the State employee pool is opened the following benefits accrue:

-Over-

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This plan could accomplish nine important goals:

- 1) It provides a potential pool of over hundreds of thousands of lives, which would reduce the costs by spreading risk over a huge population.
- 2) It reduces administrative costs by providing consistent plan design under one umbrella.
- 3) It makes broker fees transparent.
- 4) The plan design rewards employees who seek preventive care and punishes employees who utilize crisis care. This preventative model alone is significant because this will reduce costs even more over time.
- 5) The huge pool would enhance the bargaining power to lower pharmaceutical prices. Drug usage by consumers of healthcare has tripled since pharmaceutical companies have been advertising on TV in 1997. With drug costs soaring even faster than healthcare insurance, this will provide additional savings.
- 6) The reduced costs will benefit municipalities stretched by rising property taxes and employees faced with growing cost shifting and co-payments.
- 7) It could help businesses provide health care that cannot now afford it; especially small businesses.
- 8) It provides a monthly level of scrutiny and review that helps keep costs down.
- 9) It would provide more coverage for more people.

While there are a number of obstacles and variables that would kill this proposal, it could be done.

This administratively streamlined, preventive care based giant pool is a good step and bridge to the future in which "Health Care For All" becomes a reality, not a wishful slogan.